

PERIODONTAL DISEASE AND CARDIOVASCULAR RISK

Periodontal disease is a bacterial infection of the gums [“Gingivitis”] and bone [“Periodontitis”] that support your teeth. When periodontal disease is present, your body undergoes an inflammatory process in an attempt to protect and heal the involved tissues. This inflammation may affect other parts of your body such as your cardiovascular system.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do I know if I have Periodontal Disease?*

The leading warning sign of Periodontal Disease is bleeding gums on brushing or flossing, neither of which are considered normal. Other indications of Periodontal Disease include bad breath, puffy or receding gums, loose teeth, or a change in your bite. Periodontal Disease is not uncommon; studies show that it is present to some degree in almost 50 percent of Americans aged 30 years or older.

2. *What is the link between Periodontal disease and Cardiovascular Disease?*

Studies have shown a strong correlation between the amount of inflammation in the gums and the amount of inflammation in the arteries of the neck and heart. This is considered dangerous, as inflammation is the main factor in destabilizing plaque in artery walls. Both strokes and heart attacks result from the breakdown of arterial plaques.

3. *What should I do if I have Periodontal Disease?*

People with Periodontal Disease should get a complete physical exam and blood pressure measurement annually. They should also be checked for diabetes, high cholesterol and a family history of early deaths due to Cardiovascular Disease. Your physician may recommend life style changes and, if necessary, medication.

4. *What can my dentist do to reduce my risk of Periodontal Disease?*

To maintain healthy periodontal tissues, consult your dentist about appropriate homecare as well as an effective schedule of dental cleanings. You may be advised by your dentist to take medication such as prescription antimicrobial mouth wash or oral antibiotics. Additionally, your dentist may recommend salivary testing to check for certain oral bacteria pathogens and to assess inflammatory and genetic risks.

Caring for your periodontal health is extremely important as it accomplishes more than saving your teeth; it may save your life.